



Diplopedia Guidelines

Assume the good intentions of others.

If another Diplopedia user has posted something that is incorrect or incomplete, assume that this was an honest mistake. The normal standards of collegiality apply on this site.

If something is wrong, change it.

Do you see something that needs to be corrected? Go ahead and make the change yourself. If you don't know what the correction should be, e-mail someone who does, and ask him or her to change it.

If something is missing, add it.

This is a corollary to the previous guideline. You have the power to create articles – use it. Or ask someone else to create that article. Even if you start with a single paragraph, that is far better than nothing, and others can build on your contribution.

Use plain language.

When writing or editing text, imagine that you are talking to someone who would like to know more details about your work and knows nothing about the internal workings of the State Department. Hundreds of new Foreign Service, Civil Service, and contract personnel join State every year. They are intelligent and eager to learn about the institution they work for. Diplopedia should be the first thing they turn to when they want to know something about their new workplace. Using acronyms, jargon, and inside references will slow down their learning process, and the Diplopedia site will be less effective as a result. (For more information about plain language writing, visit the excellent site PlainLanguage.gov.)

Use the "Discussion" tab to discuss an article.

At the top of every article, there is a "Discussion" tab. This is a page that exists “behind” the article, and it is for discussions about the article’s substance. If you would like to insert a note about the article, or carry out a dialogue with other Diplopedia users about the article’s substance, this is the place to do that.

Use Neutral Point of View.

Much like editing Wikipedia, Diplopedia editors should strive for a Neutral Point of View. Assert facts, including facts about opinions — but do not assert opinions directly in the prose. By "fact" we mean "a piece of information about which there is no serious dispute." For example, that a survey produced a certain published result would be a fact. That there is a planet called Mars is a fact. That Plato was a philosopher is a fact. No one seriously disputes any of these things, so we can feel free to assert as many of them as we can.

If a statement of opinion or other non-neutral point must be made, clearly define which group, office, etc. is stating the point of view (attribution).